



# Life Ring

*Keeping the fishing industry in the loop*

*Safety through prevention and partnership*

## Greetings:

Welcome to our Fall 2000 Life Ring edition. We hope you'll find articles of interest and encourage you to let us know how we are doing.

We have gone through a reorganization and have a newly formed Marine Safety Division, with Captain Ed Page at the helm. The new organization has allowed us to place more emphasis and resources on maritime safety.

It's paid off! Fatalities are down this year as are the vessel losses.

LT Ernie Morton and Sue Jorgensen comprise the Fishing Vessel Safety Branch. Feel free to call if you have questions on fishing vessel safety at (800) 478-7369 in Alaska or (907) 463-2810 (Sue) or (907) 463-2811 (Ernie).

## ARE YOU READY FOR SEA?

Coast Guard fishing vessel safety personnel from Alaska and Washington met in Juneau following several tragic casualties in late 1999. The goal?—Focus on **preventing** a casualty.

A new program was born—***Ready for Sea***. **This doesn't mean any new regulations.** However, we did create a ***Ready for Sea*** checklist outlining the 10 most important safety factors that have historically made the difference between returning to port or perishing at sea. This checklist is designed to be used as a memory jogger ***before*** getting underway. The same way a airplane pilot sits and methodically goes through an extensive checklist before he powers up the engines, our hope is that you will do the same—check all the items ***before*** you power up the engines and get underway.

Check the weather, make sure safety equipment is accessible and in good working order, check to see that equipment on deck is tied down and secured, check communicating equipment (EPIRB, single side band, VHF), check high water alarms and bilge pumps, etc. The checklist is re-printed in this newsletter. It is also available on waterproof paper or laminated in plastic. If you would like a copy that will last longer, give us a call and we'll put it in the mail (phone number and address on the last page). Or, if you prefer, we have a placard that can be posted.

***Before you leave the dock...***

***...Review the checklist!***

***and...Fix it (if necessary)!***

***Check it off!***



## SHARING LESSONS LEARNED

We can learn a great deal from others' misfortunes. Another part of our *Ready for Sea* program is sharing lessons learned. The Coast Guard investigates all major marine casualties. Part of the investigation is to determine exactly what happened and make recommendations for doing things differently.

Unfortunately, an investigation can take months to complete. We decided it was essential to get lessons learned out as quickly as possible. We get those "lessons learned" out through Safety Alerts. The Safety Alerts highlight the incident and make some preliminary observations/recommendations to help other mariners avoid similar situations.

The goal is to publish Safety Alerts within two weeks of an incident, although you won't see an Alert for every incident—just incidents that highlight new issues. Included in this edition are two of the most recent Safety Alerts.

Want to read more? Access the entire library of Safety Alerts at our web page: <http://www.uscg.mil/d17/m/cfvs.shtml> or call 1-(800) 478-7369 for copies.

## RULES OF DA ROAD

Not long ago there was a collision involving a fishing vessel and a tender vessel. The fishing vessel operator didn't understand the "rules of the road" and he turned into the path of the tender vessel. He quickly saw the error when the tender vessel loomed in front of him. He slammed the vessel into reverse, just before hitting the tender. Fortunately, the two vessels sustained only

minimal damage. Had either operator been daydreaming it could have had a tragic ending.

When you drive a car you know the rules for driving on the public roads. When you operate your vessel you should know the rules for "driving" on the water. On the water, they are called "Rules of the Road", "Navigation Rules" or "Nav Rules". Whatever name you use, the rules for driving on the water can save your life.

"What do I do when I meet another vessel?" "Who has the right of way?" Every

driver should know what to do. Even though most fishing and non-commercial boat drivers aren't **REQUIRED** to take a drivers test, they should read, know and comply with the "Nav Rules". Carry a copy and review the rules at least once a year. Review the rules of the road with any crewmember that will be operating the vessel. Be a safe "driver".

Take the *Rules of the Road* quizzes to test your driving knowledge.

## WALLPAPER...

Do you ever get tired of the same old boring wheelhouse walls? Do we have a deal for you. How about free wallpaper?

We have lots of wallpaper (*placards!*) to offer: *Ready for Sea* checklist, how to make a distress call, equipment maintenance, oil pollution\*, Report all Injuries\*, marine pollution\*.

You could quickly wallpaper the wheelhouse with valuable placards. Give us a call at 1(800) 478-7369 for your free supply.

**NOTE:** \*Those marked with an asterisk (\*) are required; all others are highly recommended.

### ***Rules of the Road Quiz***

#### **Navigation Lights**

**Can you answer the following without looking at the Nav Rules book?**

**Answer on page 6**

**A vessel engaged in fishing, underway or at anchor, must exhibit:**

- a. two all-round green lights in a vertical line**
- b. three all-round red lights in a vertical line**
- c. two all-round lights in a vertical line, the upper green and the lower white**
- d. none of the above**

**Did you know the answer without looking it up? If not, you are encouraged to find a copy of the Rules of the Road and study up.**

### **MAN OVERBOARD!**

Just before the opilio crab fishery opened in the Bering Sea last April, Coast Guard and National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH) personnel accompanied Alaska Department of Fish and Game personnel during their pre-season tank checks. The purpose was two-fold. First: check crab pot loads against stability books to verify vessels weren't carrying too many pots and that they weren't stacked too high. Second: conduct a Man Overboard Survey, created specifically for the crab fishery.

A major element of the survey was on personal flotation devices (PFDs). Of the 119 surveys completed, 88 percent of the operators stated the crew were required to wear a PFD when working the crab pot stack.

**However, only 13 percent required PFD wear when working on deck!**

Work on deck isn't considered dangerous. Yet in the last ten years 56 crewmembers fell overboard

and did not survive. They weren't wearing a PFD when they fell overboard. In most cases, the body was never recovered.

Incidents involving an overboard crewman who is rescued by the vessel aren't normally reported to the Coast Guard. Yet of those surveyed, 40 operators had either fallen overboard themselves or seen someone go overboard.

Those who survive after going overboard are the lucky ones—sometimes sheer luck and sometimes because they wore some flotation. The odds of being rescued are dramatically increased when PFDs are worn.

Inflatable PFDs are available in a fanny pack or suspender, as well as float coats. Many of the inflatables and float coats. Coast Guard approved PFDs must meet rigorous standards. They are proven devices and we recommend these. Wearing a PFD is of major importance in Alaska as the waters are cold and hypothermia can set in within minutes.

Ensure you and your crew wear a PFD when on deck—save a life; maybe your own!

## LONESOME

When left on their own, immersion suits become very lonesome. Immersion suits are like some humans; when they get lonely, they come apart at the seams!

Pull your suit out of the bag and carefully check it over. Check all the seams. Make certain they aren't coming apart. Put a little pressure on each seam. Make sure the stitching isn't pulling out.

Some suits have tape covering the seams. Is the tape pulling away from the seams? If it is, contact the manufacturer and find out how to repair it. Don't use just "any old glue". Many household-type glues will eat holes in the neoprene.

Check the inflation pillow. Has it come unglued (because it's lonely) from the neoprene? The inflation pillow is really critical because if you lose that pillow you have no way to keep your head out of the water. We have received

reports of an alarming number of suits with this problem. Be sure to check it out. Get it fixed if it's coming unglued.

If you find a problem with your suit take it to a qualified immersion suit servicing facility. They can repair your suit and thoroughly check it for any further problems or damage. It may cost a few dollars. However, we know you are worth it.



## SERVING THE PUBLIC

When you see the Coast Guard, you might think they are just looking for vessels to board. That isn't always the case! The Coast Guard has a lot of different missions.

Cutters are out on search and rescue (SAR) missions. Sometimes they are placed in strategic locations "just in case" for SAR, like during certain crab openings. Cutters also patrol the Maritime Boundary Line and Dixon Entrance to see that foreign vessels aren't operating illegally in those waters.

When they do board vessels, they check for compliance with fishery and safety regulations.

When safety violations are found, the cutter will issue a Notice of Violation. For minor infractions, the owner can successfully complete a fishing vessel safety exam and reduce the violation to a warning.

For violations that are more critical—immersion suits, survival craft, communicating equipment—the vessel voyage may be terminated. Vessels are escorted to the nearest port to resolve the violations. This can get costly if you miss a fishery opening because you don't have everything you need.

So far, this year the Coast Guard terminated 15 vessels'

voyages due to major violations. Major violations include insufficient or unserviceable immersion suits, inadequate fire fighting equipment, survival craft that hadn't been serviced or sometimes even a lack of a survival craft.

So...Help us to serve the public by serving yourself and your crew. Make sure you have all the safety equipment you need and make certain it is serviceable.

Not sure? Contact a dockside examiner for a free/no fault examination of all your safety equipment. You'll find phone numbers at the end of the newsletter.

## MORE ON IMMERSION SUITS

That lonesome immersion suit really thrives on that attention! Keep checking your suit over. Look at that zipper. Immersion suits are useless if the zipper is broken, hung up on the neoprene, or so stiff you can't pull it up.

Did you know there are two sets of teeth—a big set on the outside and a little tiny set on the inside? That double set of teeth helps keep that cold water out. In order to do so, they must be waxed, inside and out. In an emergency, you should be able to easily zip the suit—nice and easy without getting hung up.

"What do you use to wax/lubricate, the zipper?"

Use a lubricant made specifically for these special zippers. Check the instructions that came with your immersion suit or contact the manufacturer to be sure you use what they recommend. Don't ever use oils like WD-40. It will do nasty things to the neoprene material—like eat it up. Use of paraffin wax is also discouraged, as it tends to clog the zipper especially in cold climates.

*Pull it out . . .*

*Zip it up . . .*

*Wax it!*

## *Rules of the Road Quiz*

### Steering and Sailing

Can you answer the following question without looking at the "Nav Rules"?

Answer on page 6.

When two power-driven vessels are meeting on a reciprocal (head-on) or nearly reciprocal courses so as to risk collision, each shall alter her course to (port or starboard)

\_\_\_\_\_ so that each shall pass on the (port or starboard) \_\_\_\_\_ side of the other.

## FINALE (for this time)...

How old is your immersion suit? 5, 10, 15 years old? Is it going to work when you need it? No one knows for sure how long these suits last but the neoprene will eventually deteriorate. Also, zippers get folded and the teeth become crooked. Heavy creases on the suit where it was folded and left stored can weaken the neoprene. The inflation tube won't last forever. The inflation pillow will get to the point where it won't hold air.

Maybe it's time to bite the bullet and spend some money on a new suit. If you originally paid \$400 for your immersion suit 10 years ago, it only cost \$40 a year. \$40 a year is the cheapest life insurance you'll find! That's less than it costs for 20 mochas or 20 6-packs of soda.

Is it time to buy a new immersion suit?

## CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

Need inexpensive ideas for Christmas? Safety equipment for the vessel are always a good idea.

**Visual distress signals**  
**Personal Flotation Device**

**Fire Extinguishers**  
**Ring buoy**

**Personal Marker Lights**  
**Immersion Suit**

## **ARE YOU READY FOR SEA?**

Do you have all the safety equipment on board? Is everything serviceable?

Take advantage of our free dockside examination program. No citations will be issued if the vessel doesn't meet all the Coast Guard requirements. We'll give you a shopping list if necessary.

If the vessel meets all the



requirements, a decal will be issued.

We have examiners in many communities in Alaska. Contact the office closest to your location to set up a free examination at your convenience.

Anchorage	(907) 271-6725
Unalaska	(907) 581-3466
Juneau	(907) 463-2448
Ketchikan	(907) 225-4496
Kodiak	(907) 487-5750
Sitka	(907) 966-5454
Valdez	(907) 835-7215
Kenai	(907) 283-3292

### ***RULES OF THE ROAD -- QUIZ ANSWERS***

***Navigation Lights:*** "d" - two all-round lights, green over white.

***Steering and Sailing:*** turn to starboard so that you pass on the port side.

If you have any suggestions for future newsletter articles or have any questions about the Fishing Vessel Safety Program in Alaska, give us a call at (800) 478-7369 (In Alaska) or (907) 463-2810/2811.

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We look forward to hearing from you! ***Fishing Vessel Safety Staff***

